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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 000434

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/19/2034
TAGS: PHUM PREL PGOV CH
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: MFA RESPONDS ON WANG BINGZHANG CASE

REF: BEIJING 402

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In response to U.S. expressions of concern about imprisoned democracy activist Wang Bingzhang on February 17 (reftel), an MFA Human Rights Division official on February 19 provided information about Wang's case, noting that MFA hopes the United States will view China's quick response as a "goodwill" gesture. The official stated that Wang Bingzhang was detained in January 2003 and subsequently sentenced to life in prison on charges of "terrorism" and "espionage." The official denied that Wang's health is deteriorating, instead claiming his condition to be "normal." PolOff noted that the information provided by MFA was strictly at odds with numerous reports indicating that Wang was a nonviolent democracy activist abducted from Vietnam and forcibly returned to China. PolOff urged China to take steps to ensure Wang's health. End Summary.

MFA: WANG BINGZHANG CONVICTED FOR TERRORISM, IN GOOD HEALTH

¶2. (C) MFA IO Department Human Rights Division Deputy Director Yao Shaojun requested a February 19 meeting with PolOff to respond to our February 17 inquiries and expressions of concern regarding imprisoned democracy activist Wang Bingzhang (reftel). Yao recounted the difficulty of obtaining case information from PRC Government agencies outside the MFA and said he hoped the United States would view the quick response as a "goodwill" gesture, while at the same time reiterating that China's official position remained that U.S. inquiries are an unwarranted "interference in China's legal system as well as its independence and sovereignty."

¶3. (C) Yao stated that Wang had been born in 1947 and hailed from Hebei Province. After 1982, Yao claimed, Wang had engaged in a great deal of "violence and terrorist activity" designed to "sabotage and undermine state security." In January 2003, Wang had been convicted in the Shenzhen Intermediate Court on charges of terrorist crimes and espionage, and sentenced to life in prison. Since March 2003, Wang has been incarcerated at Shaoguan Beijiang prison in Guangdong Province. Yao denied that Wang suffered from poor health in prison, instead asserting that his health was "normal."

¶4. (C) PolOff stated that the information provided by MFA stood in stark contrast to numerous reports that Wang was a democracy activist who had been abducted in Vietnam and forcibly returned to China in 2002. PolOff welcomed the news that Wang's health was normal but noted that this information, too, was directly at odds with reports from Wang's daughter that Wang Bingzhang's health had declined seriously during his incarceration. PolOff urged China to

take steps to ensure Wang's health, to which Yao replied that Wang's good health was also "in China's interest."

EXPRESSED HOPE FOR COOPERATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

15. (C) Yao said China welcomed engagement on human rights, expressing his hope that the United States and China could work cooperatively in this area. But on individual cases, Yao requested, the United States should proceed cautiously in its actions and statements so as not to "damage bilateral relations and the Secretary's visit." Yao claimed that "there are people and organizations" that would like to "spread rumors" in cases such as Wang's in order to "attract the U.S. Government's attention." PolOff stressed that the U.S. Government intended to continue to engage the Government of China on a broad range of issues, to include human rights and individual cases of concern.

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